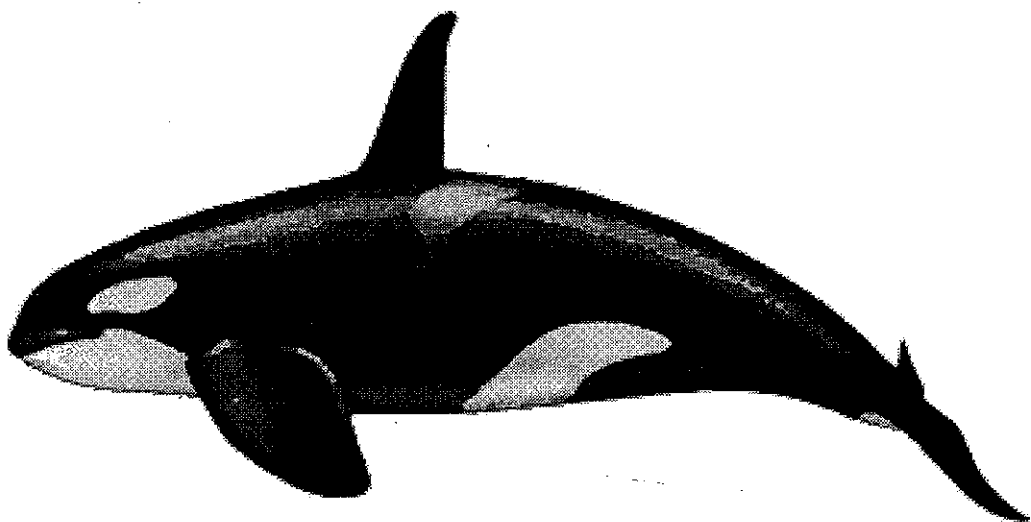


All I want is....

# THREE POINTS AND A HANGOVER

The Original Northern Spirit Fanzine



## Where's Willy?

**Issue 2**

**\$ 2**

April 1999 v Adelaide Sharks

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**NEXT ISSUE**

An excellent question. Probably at our First or second home game of the 1999-2000 regular season, unless IMG start a pre-season cup. Feel free to email us to be kept up to date.

**Submission deadline:**

2-3 weeks before it's due out. (If you want to contribute to the next issue and a worried by this date contact us.)

All I want is....

**THREE POINTS  
AND A HANGOVER**

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**What's my Point**

Firstly I would like to thank everyone for such a wonderful response to Issue One. Overwhelming is about the only word that comes close to describing such a response. When we started to put Issue One together I had no idea what the reaction would be to such a publication, but like most things associated with Northern Spirit, the sheer size of the interest was far above what I had envisaged. This month sees several new writers contributing to TPAAH and Mark Bowman returns by popular demand. We also start a new, a hopefully regular column titles My First Time. Read it on page 8 and if you feel like sharing "your first time" let us know.

The fanzine was started for many reasons but one was to give an outlet for the fans to air their views. The club and the players do read it and thus your comments both good and bad are passed on, not only to other fans but those who can do something about it. Many people offered constructive criticism of Issue One and for this we thank you. Improvements have been made and we will strive to continue improving in the future.

Of all the articles in Issue One that provoked a response, two stood out for the level of interest. Mark Bowman's Catharsis was an instant winner with the fans but our investigation about the program provoked a more intense responses. Issue one was first sold at our home game against Carlton. This game had been moved for Television and attracted our lowest crowd. We returned for the Adelaide City fixture and decided to sell the zine again. Before the game, while selling zines Glen Holloway, the man responsible for producing the Spirit programs took some issues up with us. Did he write a letter or an article for us to publish? No. Glen chose to verbally abuse fanzine sellers and verbally and physically attack me. His complaint? He objected to being called "a Muppet" (Glen used the F word but we didn't) in Issue One. He claimed that he has 20 years experience in the publishing industry and we should attack the publication and not him. Well Glen, I guess we were wrong, we had assumed the man who produces the program, the man with 20 years experience in publishing, would be responsible for it. Perhaps you could tell us who is in charge of producing the program so we can take the matter up with them. Before we wrote our article we asked fans, you know the people who pay \$2 for the program what they thought. We also asked several of the program sellers what they thought. The article we published reflected their thoughts and views. To be honest we were rather polite compared to many of the comments fans supplied us. Glen also pointed out that our first Issue contained many typo's and spelling errors. Very true, but we never claimed to be a professional production company and efforts have been made to correct these problems for this issue.

Finally Glen if you do decide to threaten and/or attack TPAAH sellers again, this time we will take the matter up with the Police.

And for those who didn't buy the Adelaide City program it was a wonderfully unreadable effort. White and Yellow text over Black and White pictures in the background. Thankfully that style lasted only one Issue and improvements were made for the next Issue.

In conclusion I would like to thank a few people. Sean & Robert for offering help with printing future issues (Sean, I will be in touch soon) and Evelyn for putting up with a lot to get both issues out. Thank you.

TPAAH would also like to welcome Cafe Beaut onboard. After Issue One was released, Victor quickly contacted me and has become the first shop stocking TPAAH. Thank you Victor. Cafe Beaut is located at Suite 2, 5 Ridge st North Sydney. TPAAH also hope to secure several more vendors in the off season.

See you at the finals  
Tancred

## INTERVIEW WITH ROBBIE SLATER

Picture this - you've been granted the rare opportunity to interview one of your favourite players of all time, the only Australian to have an English Premier League winner's medal. He's been immensely successful, and represented Australia at the highest level more times than you could remember. You're a bit excited, and anxious to impress. But something goes wrong - very wrong. For an interview that was supposed to start at 12:30, you don't manage to get there till 2:30. Understandably, the man should be very, very pissed off. But if he is, he doesn't show it. He is the consummate professional, takes the time to welcome you, and thank you for coming. Needless to say, I was stunned. Here was a man whose day I had ruined, yet he was still extremely polite. So with that background, I give you Robbie Slater...

How have you adapted to life back in Australia?

RS: Quite easily, even though I was away for 10 years, after the first few months it's been quite easy really. I still miss being overseas, it's obviously the big time, playing football over there.

How much of a change is it coming back here compared to Europe?

RS: Obviously it's a big change. I mean you're talking about the number one sport over there, whereas over here it's always had big problems. But in fairness what we're doing here at Northern Spirit has been very good, it's a professional club, and the crowd is great, it's got a real English atmosphere about it.

I remember staying up about four years ago to watch the very last game of the season, when you were away to Liverpool, and the Championship was on the line. From memory you were on the bench that day. How did that feel?

RS: I'd say that was the biggest moment of my career, winning the championship with Blackburn, and I can still remember that day. Obviously there was pressure, stress, knowing that we had to win to be positive of the title, or else if Man United won and we didn't, then they had won it. So we were obviously very worried. So when Liverpool equalised and Man Utd had loads and loads of chances at West Ham, it was obviously on the line. But we had a little SKY news thing behind the bench, so we knew what was going on there.

Not a lot is known of your stay in France, could you tell us a little bit about what it was like over there?

RS: France was the major turning point in my career. I left Australia and went to Anderlecht in Belgium, and that was a very difficult year. It was my first time out of Australia, and I was very homesick. Then I went to Lens, a little bit by luck, and that's where it all started going really well. That time was great, it was a different culture, I learnt a new language, the football was great and I met my wife. I spent about four or five years there, and they were really professional. They taught me a lot of things that I still use today.

What did you think when you were approached to come and play for a new club over here?

RS: I was very sceptical at first, and that was evident by the fact that I signed for Wolverhampton Wanderers for two years. But as this project that they had here kept progressing and they kept calling me, I found it to be more and more appealing. Then when Graham Arnold was appointed as the coach, as he's my best mate, it convinced me to come back.

Obviously the role of a captain is very important to a club, what does it entail for you?

RS: It's been very important, for myself, Graham and Chippy. We've obviously come from successful set-ups, and for the guys over here it's been very new to them, so we have to lead them, show them the right way, the way it's done. We try help them as much as possible, it's not an easy way of living when you're not used to it, and it's working quite well.

We've seen Chippy coaching the colts team this year, and he's described that as a possible next step after playing. Would you like to move into management once you've finished playing?

RS: I don't know. To be fair, I don't even think about it much, I still enjoy playing so much. Hopefully that's still a couple of years away.

Recently we've seen Sydney United in money problems, do you think that it's caused by their reliance on their segment of the ethnic community?

RS: I think it would have to be a factor. It's bound to be a reason why they can't draw many sponsors to the club. But it's not just the Croatian community, but for the Italians and the Greeks. But Northern Spirit and Perth Glory have shown the way forward for Australian football, by showing that it has to be a broad-based club, and not dominated by one ethnic community. Our crowds at Northern Spirit are from all nationalities, there's Greeks, Croatians, Aussies, English, and anyone can come and feel welcome, it's not like at Sydney United, where it's basically all Croatian.

Who would you say has been the biggest influence on your career?

RS: Definitely my mum and dad.

Robbie, thanks for your time.

I had the opportunity to read this many times before it was prepared for print, and the man comes across as a total professional. He took the time to have a game of pool and a drink with us following the 1-0 win over South Melbourne, and refused the offer of a drink following the defeat against Canberra, saying that they 'didn't deserve it'. The club is lucky to have such a great player, professional and still a man who is down to earth, and will spend time with the fans. Needless to say, the fans are lucky to have the club and the player.

Adrian Smith

PS Sorry I was late Robbie (again)



## BEACH PARTY



For the last game of the regular season, Spirit are away at Marconi on April 25 (ANZAC Day). To make this day extra special, to help take the party atmosphere on the road, as well as celebrate our last regular season away-game, we are having a party at the Marconi ground. The theme for the event is Beach Party!, so feel free to wear Hawaiian Shirts, bikinis etc. If possible try and wear White, Red and Yellow (our colours) and please: no Blue (Marconi's home colour).

See you all there.

STOP PRESS This game is now Game of the Week so Kick-off is now 5pm on April 25.

Pick up the latest copy of TPAAH at Cafe Beaut

# Cafe Beaut

Suite 2, 5 Ridge Street North Sydney

Mon-Fri 7am-5pm

9954 4030

# Floyd on Football

Since the issue of the first fanzine, so much seems to have happened. We've established ourselves in the top six, and have seen the highs of beating South Melbourne and Perth Glory and the lows of losing to Canberra and Wollongong. But when you really think about it, the football is only the half of it. Every week you can see people becoming more and more familiar with the faces around them. From my perspective, Friday night watching the Spirit has developed into a full night out, and getting in at 5am is not so uncommon. This is where I intend to go with this article..... The People.

The season is now coming to a close and when you consider that most people who you associate with on a Friday night, are people you've probably only met in the last seven months. Speaking from a Bob Stand perspective, I remember turning up on the first game only knowing two or three people that I'd met either at the pre-season Easts game, or at the Rag and Famish for a pre-season drink. During the second half of the season, a solid fan base has established itself from being a group of strangers to a group of friends who meet up and have a good time. The football is the common key, but just consider as you cast your eye around on a Friday evening, the extreme varieties of people that come together for the occasion. When you consider that in a small space in the Bob Stand, you've got Male and Female, teenage to middle age, backgrounds that vary from Students to tradesman to professionals, and during the match and afterwards all that matters is the colours that you are wearing, how well the team are playing and having a lively and entertaining night out. This is now one of the major attractions of the Spirit, and while it exists people will keep on coming back. I can't just say it's the fans either. When you have the likes of Robbie Slater and Graham Arnold who genuinely take the time to talk to you after a game in the pub, it makes all the difference. On a few occasions after a few beers, when most players and coaches in the world would have nothing to do with you, Robbie and Arnie have been more than keen to chat and have been friendly and very unassuming with it.

So where does it all go from here???

Well the Spirit have proved the critics wrong. I kept

on hearing that it wouldn't last, but with one game to go to the end of the season, I feel it's getting stronger rather than weaker. A good run in the finals would be the best bonus for the first season, especially if you consider our league form and position before the beginning of December. As for next season, we see the introduction of the Auckland Kings, a team which will be marketed similarly to that of the Spirit and Perth. There is already talk of getting a Supporters Club trip to the game next season and taking a full week off to have a short break away in the North Island. An early issue of next seasons fixture list would help here.

On my soapbox for the end of my piece, I'd like to raise three points.

One is that the away support this season has been great. So far I think Canberra and Olympic were the best and I'm hoping that Gippsland, Newcastle and Marconi are as good.

Secondly, one of the down sides to the season is the extremely poor standard of officials. The referees and linesman on the whole have been consistently poor, and something needs to be done about it.

Thirdly, why does Johnny Warrenopolous have nothing good to say about the Spirit. My feeling is that he really doesn't like the Spirit regime and would like to see us return to the mono-ethnic styles of the past. My only hope is that he will have to eat his words and commentate on a Spirit vs Perth final, with a Spirit win, as this is the future of football in Australia, and he really needs to wake up to this fact.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Grand Final, and wish you all the best for the close season.

Cheers

Julian Floyd

# Johns Point

## LEEDS UNITED AFC

There has been much talk quite recently about the policy of Leeds United AFC that targets young Australian footballing talent. Mind you, only if you are an Australian boy that's able to get your hands on a British Passport!

The arguments on both sides of this saga have credence. Yes you heard it, both sides!

Australian football authorities argue that Leeds are exploiting talent that should quite rightly, be developed and nurtured at home. They also argue that these boys should stay home until they have developed enough to go overseas. (Insert preferred deity here) knows that our league needs as much talent as possible. In fact, we are screaming for it.

Leeds argument is quite different. Obviously! They argue that they are providing professional services to young Australian footballers that we cannot.

True. All Australia can offer to lad's like Jamie McMaster is maybe an apprenticeship. Not that these are bad (as in the case of Paul Henderson and Daniel Watkins), but it still isn't full time, and the pay is shithouse!

Leeds argue that until the Australian FA get's it act together (in terms of developing young talent), they can rape and pillage to their hearts content. Another argument is that the NSL has a far too shorter season. We only have 28 games per year in Australia, compared to about 46 league games a year in the lower divisions in the England alone. When you add Cup ties, and the possibility of playing in European club football, the experience of playing in such competitions really makes our set up look shabby.

One thing I must ask, why shouldn't Leeds be able to pursue this line of recruiting?

Put yourself in Leeds' spot. You are a high profile English football club, that by your own admission cannot compete with the huge clubs like Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur (look at where Leeds' old manager is now) and scum like Arsenal! You need to tap into a footballing talent fountain that doesn't cost

you much, and that you know you're getting the best out of.

Leeds currently have on their books, in my humble opinion, Australia's best player. Harry Kewell is a very very good player. He scored a cracking goal against Tottenham in the English League a couple of weeks ago, something Wimbledon FC couldn't do in about 360 minutes of football. He is good, Juve even think so!

Leeds have been burnt by Australia's need to use Kewell in international matches. That is no secret. So why shouldn't Leeds target Australian Youth that are eligible to play for any of the home countries (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)?

My argument, and that of Leeds United AFC is that until Australian football authorities can offer the same professional opportunities that club's overseas can to young players, we have no reason to complain.

This whole saga is a big phat message to Soccer Australia, and clubs in the NSL (including Northern Spirit FC) is that we really need a structure for young talent in Australia that keeps our boys at home. This includes full professionalism, great pay, and great facilities. No one, not even Northern Spirit FC and Perth Glory, vaguely come near it.

Yet another reason we need more clubs in the NSL to be fully professional. Yet another reason we need to expand our competition, and another reason we really need to be involved in a Cup Competition of substance.

Yet another reason to rid the NSL of mono ethnic clubs that have no idea about "raising the standards" of the Australian league. They have had twenty years and should realise they have their place in Australian football - in the state leagues developing talent for NSL clubs that have got the right idea.

John

# My First Time

I will never forget the I time lost my virginity. My brother took me up the Arsenal and I loved every second of it.

Of course it wasn't my first experience. A Pele exhibition match in Valletta, Malta, aged 8 was my initiation into live football - that first innocent kiss. It was enough to make 'our gang' clear a stretch of rocky waste ground and mark out a pitch, using whitewash stolen from a building site for the lines. We played many a happy game on this pitch, including a 10-1 rout against the 'rest of the road', nine kids against our four. This particular game also introduced me to the world of biased referees. He was the dad of two of the opponents, who gave a goal that sailed ten feet above our goal line, and well above our nine year-old goalie. It still rankles whenever I look at the team photo taken that afternoon, me in an Everton shirt alongside my brother in his Arsenal one. Not that I was a real Everton supporter - I didn't even know where Everton was. I just liked the blue shirt.

Later on, after returning to England, things got more serious. A number of visits to Wembley, to see national games and the FA Centenary Match (against the FIFA all stars). The most memorable was a friendly against Germany. Some great chanting that almost made up for us losing the game. But these matches were but gropes behind the bike sheds compared to the real thing. Events to be enjoyed and remembered, but followed with a return to normal life. My heart was still my own.

Watching Wealdstone FC lose 3-1 against Telford in the Vauxhall Conference was the closest I came to supporting a 'real' team. They were relegated to oblivion that year, and sold their ground to a super-market chain the year after. But a dismal game played in a mud-bath in the pouring rain in front of 800 spectators did not fire my soul. It was an event better as a memory than as an experience, a bit like that teeth-jarring first French kiss.

Not so that fateful Saturday in December 1991. We met up with the lads just after lunchtime in a pub on Blackstock Road. It was just warm enough to stand outside and drink pints of London Pride in the weak sunshine. I only knew my brother - but the half dozen lads were all typical North London types. The

talk was all football, mostly about how we were going to thrash Spurs that afternoon. Four pints and it was time to get moving. Past the chip shop, and joining the throng moving down Gillespie Road towards the ground. With ten minutes still to go the chanting from inside the ground echoed around the streets, mixing with the hubbub of the streaming fans. Everywhere I looked there were the red and white of the Arsenal faithful hemmed in by fluoro-jacketed mounted police. In through the turnstiles and up the concrete steps to the North Bank. I wasn't prepared for the noise. It was awesome. A cauldron of chanting; rival groups competing to be THE voice of the North Bank. I didn't see much of the match, tossed and turned as I was in that sea of supporters, especially when we scored our two goals. I left the ground in a trance, surrounded by the chanting throng. Back in the pub I was using 'we' to describe the Gunners. It had been better than sex. The next home match against Everton (4-2) I was wearing red and white and my 1970s Everton shirt was but a faint memory. From then going to Highbury became my religion.

The first time I cried for Arsenal was just six months later on May 2nd 1992 against Southampton (5-1). My new found love, the North Bank, had heard it's last chant and was cleared by thuggish coppers in preparation for it's demolition. Now it is called the North Stand, and the ground has the nickname Highbury 'the library'. Of course I continued going. But it wasn't the same. Arsenal had been unfaithful and our relationship was changed forever.

That was then, and now is now. I am reborn as a Spirit fan. For the first time since 1992 I can stand and sing my heart out for the lads. For now Arsenal is part of my past, and Spirit my future. Being in at the start of a is a great opportunity and a great responsibility, and it fills me with hope.

The future is looking damn good.

Phill

# Media Bias?

In Australian football we get a little used to having the media off-side with us. Every minor scuffle (mere picnics relative to one day cricket trouble) are deemed terrible hooliganism; every snippet of organisational or financial doom and gloom is pounced upon by the media. Certainly, our administrators haven't always deserved favourable coverage in the past, and our powers that be haven't fostered a great relationship with the press. But at one stage or another every football fan in this country has found cause for anger in the way our great game is covered, or not covered.

Now, some establishments like the Daily Telegraph are so heavily invested in Rugby League it doesn't bear mentioning. After all, it will be years before Rupert is likely to get some return from the money he has spent in the failed Super League war. More annoying is David Hill's decision to sell TV rights to channel 7, who are so in bed with the AFL that they daren't give soccer the priority it deserves. As a result their obligation is 5 minutes on Sunday Sportworld and an atrocious on-selling of TV rights to an ambivalent ABC. But what of the so-called "uncommitted" media? One would assume the Fairfax press has no financial interest in seeing football go down, so how does the Sydney Morning Herald rate in terms of Australian football coverage? Now that Spirit home games are in direct competition with Rugby League, I decided to compare the Herald's reporting of Spirit home games with the coverage they give for league games in Sydney, relative to crowds. For league "round one" I ignored the Olympic stadium double header since, as one Herald letter suggested "lawn bowls would have attracted that crowd on novelty value". The reporting space is given as lines per standard column.

## Rugby League round 1, vs Spirit

Edition	Game	Crowd	SMH lines
6/3/99	Spirit v Adelaide	15,104	43
8/3/99	Norths v Wests	4,707	149
	Souths v Canterbury	9,673	165
	Cronulla v Balmain	8,616	128
9/3/99	Auckland v Easts	10,124	146

There were photos for all league games except for Norths/Wests, but no photo for the Spirit game.

The next weekend, Spirit had the bye. However during the week someone called Paul Kent wrote an article in the Herald examining "Sydney's Best Sporting Night Out".

Interestingly he went to the cricket, the baseball, the boxing, the basketball but didn't think joining 15,000 others at North Sydney Oval was worth the effort for the report. Incensed by this, I wrote to the Herald letters section and complained about the lack of Spirit (and Australian football in general) coverage. I later discovered Tancred also wrote. Well, they didn't print the letters but perhaps they found their way over to the sports department. In any event, for Spirit's next home game it seems Michael Cockerill was allowed to sharpen his pencil better, in a more even coverage (in this comparison I provide actual word numbers):

#### Rugby League round 3, vs Spirit

Edition	Game	Crowd	SMH word count
19/3/99	Spirit v Canberra	10,482	655
	Parramatta v Easts	20,276	856
(SMH Internet)	Balmain v N Qld	5,969	498
	Cronulla v Souths	18,126	518
22/3/99	Penrith v Wests	7,276	759
	Auckland v Manly	7,077	693
	Canterbury v Newcastle	26,341	807

However, the Spirit's game report was buried a few pages back in the Saturday edition and of course, it seems Herald photographers have not been allowed into NSO since Christmas.

So, let's watch the comparisons for a few more weeks. I hope the Herald will continue to respond to pressure and do a better job. After all, are not a lot of "Heralds" home delivered to North Shore homes? Or do they assume that in Northern Sydney we must all be Rugby fans, or couch potato league fans? If that is so, why are professional types like me regularly found in the Bob Stand – and I'm certainly not there on my own. Could it be, media types, that you are missing a big target audience that actually quite like seeing and reading about good old Aussie football?

Mark Bowman

## New Developments at North Sydney Oval

The success Northern Spirit are having in attracting large numbers of fans on a regular basis to home games clearly shows just how strong football can be in Australia. Indeed, if planned growth does happen next year, the sold-out sign might become a regular fixture outside the gates of North Sydney Oval. For every home game Northern Spirit are currently forced to spend \$25,000 on extra lighting and replacement of the cricket pitch. This sort of cost for every home fixture is a very high price to pay on top of the cost to hire the venue and it was wonderful to read in the Mosman Daily on March 4 that North Sydney council is moving to install additional permanent lighting at the ground.

The council voted 11-2 in favour of new lighting and Genia McCaffery, the Mayor of North Sydney said that the temporary lights used by Northern Spirit were destroying parkland around the ground as heavy trucks were required to move the lights in and out. Despite voting yes for the lights she went on to say that the council had to control how often the lights were used suggested a possible restriction of 16-16-17 games per season. Excuse me?? On the assumption of 16 regular season fixtures, 1 finals fixture and perhaps 2 cup fixtures this already puts Spirit over the suggested restrictions.

Even worse are the comments made by Councillor Andrew Gunter, who voted against the lights. He feels that the demands of particular leases (ie the Spirit) are becoming endless. This is of course the same council that controls all the food and drink concessions within the ground. Every dollar made on food and drink goes straight to North Sydney Council. Sources at the ground have told me that even selling medium and light strength beer, Spirit fans drink far more beer than previous crowds at North Sydney Oval. To me it sounds like the council should start to be a bit more thankful we are using the ground. Just across the harbour stands a real football stadium, with plenty of food and drink areas, ample toilets, quality corporate facilities and room for the Spirit to grow. I can't see Spirit moving to Brookvale. The lack of Public Transport alone would rule out most fans travelling. This leaves only North Sydney Oval on the North Shore and despite the councils claims that it is a first class venue, the reality is that it no longer is truly first class.

Also of interest is the position the Mosman Daily has taken with this issue. They seem to be very opposed to the whole idea but it is not clear if their objections are just against any redevelopment of the ground or if they just don't like the idea of football being played there.

When Spirit were away at South Melbourne the North Sydney Hotel showed the game on the big screen. 22 people showed up to watch the game on TV and at the same time a cricket game was being played at the ground. I counted only 19 people in the stands watching the cricket. Entry was free. In many other parts of the world councils facing this situation would be discussing how best to square off the ground and develop a real football venue rather than catering to 19 unpaying cricket fans.

In the short term North Sydney Oval is a good home for Northern Spirit. The capacity is currently sufficient, public transport is excellent and the close proximity to shops and pubs, open before and after games help keep the Oval a desirable location to call home.

If North Sydney Council truly wants to keep us as tenants at the ground, planning for the future does need to start. Currently, Spirit have an average crowd of over 16,500. This is without significant television coverage and with some areas of the print media ignoring us. Imagine how big we will become as this media attitude slowly changes. When this happens, and it has already started will North Sydney Oval be prepared for it? Lets all hope so.

Hello oh appointed ones:

Just bought the first fanzine and love it. The reason I'm writing this is pure and simple. Why do I love Spirit?

I fell in love with football when I was 10 joining Busby Sports and wanting to be the next Craig Johnston. I watched the English league and immediately fell in love with Liverpool after my grandfather told me Craig Johnston was an Aussie.

Soon enough I was watching NSL also and Blacktown City was my adopted team. I still remember sitting inside the fence at Marconi Stadium watching Kevin Keegan in his second guest appearance at the club. The ground was filled to the rafters but something was missing.

Soon enough Blacktown died as a national club and the NSL went back to an ethnic oriented boring league that offered no value what so ever to an Aussie teenager. The English and Scottish leagues would further grab my interest as a love of Rangers evolved watching blokes like McCoist carve them up.

1988 and my schoolmate Bosnich heads over to the UK and plays under Leighton at Man U meaning I watched more league games and became increasingly envious of the poms with singing capacity crowds loving their football. So he became a Villa man and so did I and still hoped tht one day an Aussie team would hook me.

It was August 1998 and I heard about a club forming on the North Shore of Sydney. They were involved with the Manly - Warringah district and were to be managed by Graham Arnold. Not bad I thought.

Next I hear Robbie Slater is coming home to captain the side. I'm in I thought what a legend.

It was October and I made my 1 and a half hour pilgrimage on Public transport from the West of Sydney to watch the Spirit in their debut against Olympic not knowing what to think. It was 6.30 and I arrived hoping to hear some English ex-pats singing a few tunes. Then it grabbed my attention the sign said Spirit Point and when i walked up it wasn't just Poms but Asians, Europeans and Aussies were ther too.

The crowd was 17000 odd and the atmnsphere was electric. I was hooked. What a rush. The anthem went up and 17000 in unison sang. Shivers ran down my back in antipation. I bought a program and read the starting line up. Not bad I thought but who the hell's Crook. It didn't take long to learn he'd be the Rock of Gibraltar at the back.

Slater immediaetly made an impact as did Cranney, Casserley and Arnie. A nervous keeper who tried his heart out was the love of the crowd and their was this Croatian import I'd never heard of. Marusic was the name and only after watching his intial touches you could see star written all over him.

A loss and with numerous free tickets handed out, would the crowd be back next week. Would Sydney siders turn up and watch the likes of Sydney United, Melbourne Knights and Canberra. You bet and along they came singing, screaming out nicknames and most importantly kids wearing a Spirit jersey not a Man Utd or Liverpool.

Soon enough we had our own songs and our own unique atmosphere. So to , Mark, Remo, Graham, Kerry, Kathryn, Robbie, Hendo, Kres, and everyone at the club thankyou.

My dream has come true and lets hope that in four of five years families right around Australia have a team to follow. Perth and Northern Spirit have shown how a club should operate. If only the other administrators including Soccer Australia could open their eyes to a whole new world. Your's In Sport,

Scott Daly

## The Future of Football in Australia

In late Febuary TPAAH recieved this letter from Digby

The Day I told Soccer Australia what time the Socceroos are kicking off

Today I rang Soccer Australia to find out what time the Socceroos game on June 12 kicks off at the new Olympic Stadium. I spoke to a receptionist by the name of Peta. The conversation went something like this.

Receptionist: "Good afternoon, Soccer Australia, this is Peta."

Me: "Oh yes, I just wondered if you could tell me what time the Socceroos game kicks off on June 12."

Receptionist: "I'm sorry sir, but we don't have that information. You'll have to call Stadium Australia."

Me: "Oh, I thought the Socceroos were playing. Who's the game between then?"

Receptionist: "Yes sir, the Socceroos are playing, but Stadium Australia are responsible for the organisation. I'll give you their number, it's 9411 8900."

Me: "Okay, but why can't you tell me what time the game kicks off - this is the national team playing isn't it?"

Receptionist: "Yes sir, but we are not involved in the organisation of the game. It's an arrangement between Stadium Australia and FIFA, and they have invited the two teams who are playing, one of which will be the Socceroos. The only involvement that Soccer Australia has is that we are the governing body for soccer in Australia, and as such we are providing one of the teams."

Me (rather dumbfounded): "Okay, so you're providing one of the teams, the Socceroos, the national team. You must know what time they are going to be kicking off, I mean tickets are on sale today so it must be public knowledge."

Receptionist: "I'm sorry sir, I don't know, you'll have to call Stadium Australia."

Me: "Okay, I'll call Stadium Australia, and maybe you should as well, so that next time someone like me rings up you'll be able to give them an answer."

Receptionist: "I might do that, yes."

So I rang up Stadium Australia and obtained all the details with the speed and professionalism so sadly lacking at Soccer Australia. To save my friend Peta a phone call I decided to call her back and provide the details.

Receptionist: "Good afternoon, Soccer Australia, this is Peta."

Me: "Have you got a pen and paper there?"

Receptionist: "Yes sir."

Me: "Gates open at 4.30, Entertainment starts at 6.30, and kick-off is at eight."

Receptionist: "Thanks very much for that."

So there you have it. The day I told Soccer Australia what time the Socceroos are kicking off.

Digby

Even early last year this sort of experience dealing with Soccer Australia was unfortunately the norm. Even with all the major improvements made there in the past 12 months some areas still need to be worked on. The fragmentation of Football in this country, and the lack of professionalism shown by some areas, are significant problems, but with the release of Soccer 21, a report and action plan for the future of the game, improvements may be only months away.

No-one can doubt the size of football in this country. Far more people under the age of 15 play football than any other sport. With the advent of Pay TV more and more people can watch football from around the world and even on Free to Air TV, the ratings of shows, such as the World Cup (on the middle of the night) and the English Premier league, prove many people love to watch the game. Also given Australia's large immigration intake, most of the people have moved from football loving nations so why shouldn't they support the game here?

In an effort to address these problems Soccer 21 aims to take the game into the next century on a well-run basis. Started in 1997 and completed in late 1998 it contains wide ranging reforms and ambitious plans.

Major and interesting points include:

The integration of currently disjointed associations, from National & state and local is addressed. This includes smaller social groups, church and social leagues, as well as all forms of football. (Mens, Womens, futsal, beach football, and Officials etc).

Revenue sharing issues are also critically discussed. The current lack of funds in the game should be addressed by future plans.

For international focus, several plans are outlined for our relations with both Oceania and Asia. We plan to work closer with both confederations, assisting with development in Oceania and working at marketing and promotional opportunities with Asia. Australia aims to have a closer relationship with Asia and its competitions.

Marketing the word "soccer" is briefly mentioned but by June 1999 a report will be commissioned into the feasibility of renaming to Football Australia and branding the sport Football (I

say don't even think about this - JUST DO IT).

There are plans to actively show all levels of Government just how big football is in Australia. This should help with future plans and ground redevelopments etc.

Better relationships with the media and a continuation of promoting events, such as the Hall of Fame, is seen as very important.

The National league will be restructured at the end of next season. The plan is for 10-14 clubs, all professional, all with at least \$5 million and planned crowds of 15-20,000. The long term plan is to be the number one sport by 2010. A franchise system would be started to ensure clubs complied with requirements and every club will be required to have business and marketing plans. These will be submitted to Football Australia (the FA. Sounds great doesn't it) before every season.

This is a brief summary of the 27 page document. Perhaps the worst thing is most of the ideas are so very obvious. Put 10 fans in a pub for a day and I feel they could come up with similar recommendations. It's only when you realise how the game is run today, do you see why the game is in the trouble it is. Regardless of this it is good to finally see a plan of action. If the majority of the recommendations are acted upon the profile of football in Australia is guaranteed to rise. Some fans will remember these sorts of reports have been produced before. The Bradley Report stands out for this. Some clubs complied with it, others did not and yet they remain in the league to this day. The key factor here is circumstances have changed. Glory and Spirit have shown what Australia what can be. If only one new club continues these huge improvements next season, the weight pushing for reform grows.

The next critical date to watch is the start of next season. With the reforms to take place after next season it's hard to see how the league will turn around over a period of several months. Currently not even Spirit meets the guidelines (but were are very close). I would predict that some changes will be made for the next season. It's hard to see how clubs in receivership can compete next season. Despite the efforts of their fans to raise the needed money, crowds under 5,000 just will not bring in the revenue need to be in the National League. Soccer 21 also examines the need to provide services for fans. This means quality stadiums, stadiums that are accessible by car and Public Transport. In Sydney, only Spirit and Olympic are serviced by Public Transport.

After years of waiting it now seems that the average football fan in Australia may get the sport placed in the shape it should have been 20 years ago. There will be a lot of agony and fighting over how it should be done, but the push to become a well run, professional sport has never been stronger. Those dealing with Soccer Australia in recent months have seen some improvements taking place. New people have been employed in several key positions, notably in Publicity and Media relations. If these sorts of improvements continue to take place the league of the future will be a very exciting league indeed.



## TOPSY TURVY SEASON

A look at the ups and downs of the 98/99 season so far  
by 'Bob Stand Bertie'

What a strange year it has been for most of Australia's leading football clubs. News of financial difficulties, long-term injuries, mind-numbing decisions from 'them in black', great goals, strange goals, scribes lambasting all that moves (and receiving in kind) and, of course, the 'new kids on the block' - Northern Spirit.

Financial problems have been well documented with both Gippsland Falcons and Sydney United feeling the effects of a trend reversal - supporter drain, (United blaming it on Spirit taking all their fans? Now that's what you call 'loyalty' but, after having witnessed them in action twice this term, we neither want nor need them!). Without paying customers, corporate sponsors are unlikely to become involved. Without sponsorship, it becomes increasingly difficult to tempt better players to a club, especially with tighter financial constraints and wage structures. Associated areas are also affected. Matchday programmes, merchandise, entry fees, food and beverages etc. In all, it creates an ever decreasing spiral, a spiral which can only be arrested by a massive influx of cash which the code, as a whole, finds hard to generate, or by tempting more people through the turnstiles. 'Catch 22' springing to mind yet?

Can clubs survive if their fans, or lack thereof, continue to behave in such a manner as to bring the name of their club into disrepute amongst supporters of other teams that they will not attend a match there? Does the geographical location

add to their woes if not central to a densely populated area? And do they appeal for the support of the 'entire' local community?

The important factor is summed up in the word 'community'. Clubs that are largely believed to be 'mono cultural' are finding it harder to build upon their existing, if dwindling, supporter base. Those that do attend make life difficult for anyone else to go along and support the team. This is not the view shared by any of the Ericsson Cup Board of Directors as they, in the main, want their particular team to become successful and so be able to build on that for the future. Sadly, far too many who state that their clubs are 'multi-cultural' are blinded to the fact that they are not, never have been and are most unlikely to ever become so. Many have tried, and indeed are trying, but not enough clubs are doing everything possible to enhance their reputations as a football team, as opposed to a 'breeding ground for thuggery and racism'. Clubs remain in an untenable position if the seats remain empty and the gap on the terracing grows ever wider.

Long term injuries can strike at every club and, as will ever be the case, they often do. Take Nathan Day for example. He joined the beleaguered Sydney United ('them') this term and became a major casualty before a kick in anger almost. Similarly, Tony Perinich, Chichi Mendez and Scott Ollerenshaw, of Northern Spirit, went the same way and were quickly followed by team mates Ian Crook (1 and a bit games), Troy Cranney (4 games) and Adem Poric (1

and a bit games). There are many more that could be added to this list from various clubs around the league but let's take a look at the side on top, South Melbourne. To say that they have had a very settled side this season would be an understatement and it becomes quite apparent that the more settled a side is, the better the understanding, the better the play, the better the results. Indeed, Petkovic, Isifidis, De Amicis, Orlic and Clarkson started at the back in 14 of the first 18 matches this term, (the sequence only broken when Clarkson didn't play), and in 18, 17, 18, 16 and 14 respectively up until Rd 18. Add to that: Paul Trimboli (15 aps 2 sub), Michael Curcija (15 aps) and Vaughan Coveny (17 aps 1 sub) and you have the nucleus of a very talented team that has proven virtually irresistible this term (unless you are a 'keeper who can have the ball knocked out of his hands etc. etc.). During that first 14 match run, both Curcija and Coveny scored 7 apiece and, at time of writing, the side were sitting pretty with some 37 goals (an average of over 2 per game) to the good and just 21 against, or in other words, a 3-to-1 ratio in favour. Take a look at the Canberra for and against columns and then see what players have been together in consecutive matches and you may just get an idea of what it's all about.

Strange and dubious decisions are what many supporters believe come their way each and every season but it surely must be that 'Spirit' fans feel they are getting the 'bums rush' of far too many. Take 'Rudes' at Belmore. Was his tackle on Emerton more ferocious, more callous in design than that of Ante Juric on 'Bulldog' - captain Robbie Slater? Don't think so and to compound matters further, what happened when young 'Langers' was up-ended in the same match? Nothing, as usual. Let's take it a step

further. Against Newcastle, 'Langers' was again the victim, but this time it was in the last minute, inside the box and the scoreline locked at 0-0. Lee Sterrey, their coach, admitted after the game that "it was a penalty from 100 yards away." Did we get one? Of course not! How then, certain clubs manage to knock the ball out of a 'keepers hands to score, without being penalised, is another matter I suppose. Not just once in a game but TWICE!!!! Consistency, it seems, is only for the clubs who can afford it, not for those that are fast-tracking into the big time and raising the expectations and dreams of football in this country. If further clarification were needed on the point about 'rules for one', see how many 50-50 decisions go the way of Spirit in games.

Great goals don't come any better than the solitary effort from Michael 'Coons' Cunico this term, or the screamers of Kresimir Marusic (v them) and 'Chippy' (v Sharks) or Danny Watkins solo run against the Knights. Phwaaor, what a goal. Of course, any goal that finds the net in Spirit's favour has to hold a special place for our many thousands of fans - especially those of us who travel to the away matches, where the fun, enjoyment and incessant chanting for the side reach greater heights, albeit at a lower decibel level. Strange goals, as in the opening par, is slightly misleading. Sorry. However, we must have the strangest goals in the league. I'm only very slightly surprised that they haven't raised the white flag and capitulated to the violent assault that takes place upon them in every home game. Take that match against 'them' (we lost 1-2) when Watkins hit the bar after out-jumping a shaky looking defence, and then we went on to hit both uprights and shave them all very closely on a number of occa-

sions after that. Now that's what I call a strange goal. It wouldn't be so bad if we only did it at home but, when on our travels, we seem to do the same thing. The only time we haven't had such rotten luck inside the 18-yard box was when we belted four past Marconi and, in all honesty, anyone who didn't think that this particular victory wasn't so very, very sweet indeed, obviously lives in the shadow of 'the carpark', somewhere way out west.

Scribes giving and taking all sorts of nonsense has become seemingly rife this term. One particular incident springs to mind when the ground announcer at Belmore accidentally mentioned 'South Melbourne Hellas' at one match and was lambasted greatly by a certain Sydney journo. OK, we all know that this was remiss but did it really warrant such a mention in a supposed football column. No! Perhaps it may be perceived that the gentleman in question is not quite as good at his job as the editor may have thought because he obviously couldn't track down a fart in a bottle let alone a football related story when there are thousands out there just waiting to be written. Another one has gone to print bemoaning the language often used in association with the fans. A gentleman who has travelled the world reporting on the game should know an awful lot better. There is, perhaps, no need for it but it is something that remains endemic to society in general. Walk down any street and you will hear something, which is obviously alright because it's not a few thousand saying it at once. Get a grip on reality. Report on what you're there for - the football - and then think

back to the chanting at your beloved cricket matches. Thugby League, Aussie Rules and several other massed ranks of supporters (this term used very loosely of course) often use expletives but, as unorganised as they are, they have no idea on how to sustain an atmosphere like that of a real football match.

What's that phrase about glass houses....?

Northern Spirit Football Club has surmounted these obstacles, the marauding hordes, the detractors, the sycophantic ramblings of the Star Trek scribe tribe - the cling on's - and gone from strength to strength. We have the best, the most and particularly loyal supporters in Sydney and, indeed, the ONLY club than can rival us in this regard is Perth Glory.

Together we can make the Australian sporting public sit up and take notice. For the 'traditional' clubs, and their nowhere supporters, it remains a matter of raising their game to our standards and, if possible, the IQ of their fans if they are to survive beyond the next half-decade.

One final point.

On winning the Sydney Cup, not only have we the best fans, but we've shown all of Sydney that we have the best team as well. All together now:

'Silverware, oh silverware,  
At least we've got some silverware,  
We've won it here,  
We've won it there,  
At least we've got some silverware!

(to the tune of 'The Red Flag')

# SINGING WITH JULIAN

To the tune of 'Land and Hope Glory'

We all follow the Spirit  
Over land and sea (and Sydney)  
We all follow the Spirit  
On to Victory...!

<followed instantly by >:  
(To a different tune)

Run Run wherever you may be,  
We are the Boys from North Sydney  
and we'll beat you all  
wherever you may be  
'cause we are the boys from North Sydney  
<Repeat above once, then go> shhhhhh-  
hh.....

<Then it's the girls turn for the third go....>

Run Run wherever you may be,  
We are the Girls from North Sydney  
and we'll beat you all  
wherever you may be  
'cause we are the Girls from North Sydney

2)

Que Sera Sera  
Whatever will be will be  
We're going to win the league  
Que sera sera

Repeat at least once....!

3) For away games...  
to tune 'when the saints go marchin in'

My Garden Shed, is bigger than this  
My Garden Shed is bigger than this

It's got a door and a window  
My Garden Shed is bigger than this

4)

to song 'You are my sunshine'

You are my Spirit  
My only Spirit  
You make me happy  
When Skies are grey  
You'll never know how  
much I love you  
So please don't take  
My spirit away.....

Then all go mental singing

na, na, na, na, (ohh!)  
na, na, na, na, (ohh!)  
etc

and lets not forget  
To the tune of 'He's got the whole world in  
his hands.'

Your are the worst linesman....  
in the world  
Your are the worst linesman....  
in the world  
Your are the worst linesman in the world  
Hey! Hey!

and of course repeat

Dear Sir,

Your Fanzine is slightly "Bob Stand"-centric at the moment. There is a world outside Spirit Point, including other parts of North Sydney Oval. Despite leading a chorus of "Chika Chika Chika" at Edensor Park when the blonde one walked past us with Remo, I have never seen her or Katherine Greiner sampling the wooden bench seating with the hot sun blinding their eyes. Perhaps what we need is a bloodhound-like reporter to do an "Inside The Corporate Box" expose.

I also think certain questions need to be asked.

1. Did Tony Labbozzetta wish he was back at Fairfield enjoying the sumptuous facilities of Club Marconi when the Spirit Point boys and girls started chanting "Labbozzetta Mafia"?

2. When Sydney United turned up, who paid their bar bill?

3. Is Joel Griffiths the biggest dick-head in the NSL?

4. And the most important one of all: How come Archie Thompson has played twice at North Sydney Oval for two different clubs and each of those games has attracted a record-low crowd?

Only Adem Poric has a worse record at NSO than Archie, but even he does not keep the punters away in droves.

Finally can I suggest a couple of additions to your 'zine as follows:

a) You need a regular "loser of the month" award, something which can preferably be awarded in retrospect to Francis Awaritife who not only got hammered 4-0 and had a goal disallowed for off-side but then actually gave an interview to a non-existent fanzine of the the opposition club and found himself admitting in print that he is a fan of

Northern Spirit.

b) Security guard of the month column, describing how oodles of bag-checkers at the gates managed to miss two flares and a smoke bomb at the Olympic Game, and how the same team of quiet enforcers allowed Sydney United supporters to ignite incendiary devices in the McCartney Stand, even though everyone in Australia knows that certain followers of that club always carry flares and smoke bombs.

Wayne Cooper.

*Some good points Wayne. Yes we are a bit "Bob Stand"-centric at the moment but this could be due to the fact that most of the writers stand in the Bob. We would love to have writers from different parts of the ground so if anyone is interested please get in contact. As to your questions 1) I was told Tony Labbozzetta was in Italy at a annual youth team tournament, 2) When we went to Sydney United they ran out of beer at half time so I guess there is little hope for them, 3) I guess Joel Griffiths decided he never wanted to play for Spirit after all and finally given Carlton's current crowd troubles perhaps he might not have been the best signing for them. As to the security guards yes the old company were a joke. I carried a large box of zine's through the gate and that was not searched. In recent weeks a new company has been employed who seem to be a lot more professional.*

What's  
Your  
Point

Dear Tancred, John and Adrian,

Congratulations for producing a fanzine which gave me something interesting to read after the Carlton game. It's about time someone told the truth about the things that happen on and off the field at Northern Spirit.

Before the season started I telephoned Northern Spirit to find out some information about them as I was interested to support a team with no ethnic affiliation. Also being a West Ham United fan I was keen to see Robbie Slater in action again. I spoke to Mickey Brock who assured me

that everything to do with the club was 'top notch'(his words). He also told me that Spirit would be getting Attilio Lombardo on loan in January. We got Goldberg instead..... I've been to all the home games and I'm really impressed at the standard of football played by Spirit. I think we can certainly say we get our money's worth at North Sydney Oval. The club certainly prise the maximum amount of money from us. Take for example the replica shirts. The first few games of the season the shirts were \$85. Then one day the price was \$90. Why?

Also the season ticket prices baffle me somewhat. The point of buying a season ticket is to get a discount by buying in bulk. Mickey Brock outlined the prices to me before the season started and said that a general admission season ticket would be \$140 for 14 games. General admission is \$10 so where is the saving?. Mickey explained that if I became a member I could save 10% on the season ticket price. Membership is \$35. Again where is the saving? There is no incentive to buy a season ticket and the club probably don't want that.

I totally agree with your article on the programme. The first issue, called 'footballer' (what??) was huge and contained nothing. It was as if somebody who had no idea about football was commissioned to write the programme. I'm glad that the programme is getting more user friendly as the weeks go by.

I also agree with your comments on Tim Bailey. Now there's someone who probably calls football 'the round ball game'. He is really irritating. Classic quote from Tim during the halftime entertainment at the Carlton game when the kiddies were dribbling the ball around the witches hats, "in and out like Zali Steggall". Please Tim, this is a family crowd you're addressing. Also he used the phrase 'volley for a volvo' during the volvo shooting contest at the Carlton game. Somebody please explain to Tim what a volley is. But as Mickey Brock said, everything about Spirit is top notch.

My last whinge (thank heavens you say) is that I got into heaps of shit for attending the game on

Valentines Day. That wouldn't have happened if the game was on the Friday as planned. Also we would have seen another crowd of 17,000 instead of the 8,000 who showed. Just so the game could be on TV. I suppose it takes a situation like that to show who the real fans are.

Thank you for producing a fanzine which shows the real side of the story. Don't get me wrong, I've had a great time at all the games and am looking forward to the finals. I know I'm a whinger but I'm passionate about the club and want them to mirror Mickey Brock's pre-season comments.

Cheers  
Paul Freeman

What's  
Your  
Point

It has been well known in this inaugural season of the Northern Spirit FC that the club has wide drawing power. Our fledgling club is the envy of the league (bar Perth). With none of the established clubs being able to reach the figures our club has reached in one match. To those of you on the Spirit mailing list you will know that the October 9 match against Sydney Olympic was the only match I have been able to see this year. I am not at NSO. I'm not even in Sydney. I probably the Spirit's farthest flung fan, based at present in wintry Canada.

For a person who has put a great deal of effort into helping get our dream-club up and running it may surprise you to hear that I took off after only one match, probably not to be back until at least the next season sometime. My reasons are thus. Back in 98 I was in a major quandary; I wanted to head overseas but had to choose. It had always been my wish to travel around North America so I had been planning to do just that from mid 1997. However there lay a couple of obstacles to these plans. In 1998 there was to be the World Cup. And my

beloved Soccerroos were going to be there, right? This was going to be the day in the sun, with the whole world watching.

The major hassles lay in the fact that if I wanted to travel around North America and work in Canada I would have to do this before the date of my 26th birthday. Any later and I would legally not have been allowed to work in Canada, with people over 26 ineligible to receive holiday visas. So it was 1998/9 or never for Canada. BUT, by the time Australia was preparing to battle Iran at the MCG there was no way I was NOT going to be in France to see them.

<snip>  
<removed by editor to save readers from the pain that will always be Nov 29 1997>  
<snip>

One of many slight problems in my travel plans was the announcement of a new club in the NSL. This club was what I'd be dreaming about for years as I wandered nomadically around the football grounds of NSW looking for a club I felt I belonged to. It was in my area of town, playing at North Sydney Oval, and was to do for football in Sydney what Perth had done for the whole game a couple of years previously. The new club the Northern Spirit was going to be even better than Glory-completely professional both on and off the pitch. WOW, this was my dream club. But what about my trip?

As it turns out I received the draw for the 1998/9 A League season, after anxious waiting and numerous calls to an increasingly annoyed Northern Spirit office. The first game of the season was to be on October 9, my birthday. The opponents, Sydney Olympic. I had to be in Orlando Florida by the next weekend, so this fixture was going to be the only match I would see of my newly found club.

Despite knowing all along that I would only be watching one match I was as committed as ever to do what I could to get things rolling in

terms of supporter arrangements. I attended the fair day and met up with several other keen fans in a place that was to become one of the most talked about areas in Australian football, the North Sydney Oval Bob Stand. Actually the fact I would be leaving for OS strengthened my desire to make my mark on things where I could. Several meetings were organized with both the newly appointed fan liaison officer Mickey Brock as well as club president Remo Nogerotto and the board of directors. I still remember the impressed looks on their faces as myself and Chris Dunkerley from Epping stood on the seats in the Bob Stand perusing pamphlets about the plans the supporters had.

After a great deal of preparations the first day arrived. With all my pre-departure nerves I was a nervous mess, especially considering I had had a horrible tonsil operation only three weeks before the kick-off of the Olympic match, ensuring my throat would be a mess even before the first ball was kicked. I even recall telling my mother that we may as well can all notions that it was my birthday-of greater significance was a different sought of birth, that of the Northern Spirit FC. I got to the ground dressed in my hurriedly made Spirit jacket and scarves from football teams I follow from all over the world. History now states however for all to see that Olympic won a fiery encounter 2-0. My only memory of the Spirit was to have been a loss. I was a little sad not to have seen the side win. Or to at least have savored the atmosphere after a North Sydney oval goal for the home team. But how many debut teams stuff up in their first game? I left NSO a little disappointed by the proceedings of my only Spirit game. But full of hope for the future of the club.

But in truth I had done all I could have done whilst I was around. My memories of me will linger on in the massive flag that is hoisted over the heads of the Bob Standers-the designs I made somehow were transformed from a bad drawing I sent to the club into about 25 square meters of white and red cloth. Also the idea of having jackets with patches on them for the Ultra types in the Bob Stand was one I helped

come up with. The job of supporting the team would however have to go to others. At least I thought that with 18000 attending the first match that there would be plenty of takers on that score.

But luckily we are in the age of the Internet and multimedia. Information (and insults!) can fly around the world in seconds. A Spirit score sent in an email from Australia can be read in Germany, Botswana or the USA/Canada. In a matter of minutes! After about 20 hours of travel via Japan I was able to check my email in Los Angeles. I remember to this day the slightly bemusing feeling I had as I commented on the Spirit's first match with people who only days before were at my side.

Yet now we were actually over 20000 km apart. I was so close yet so far. I'm now happily settled in Vancouver Canada and have gone to an internet café religiously each day to check my mail, thus linking me with the world I have in some respects left behind. I would religiously check my email every Friday morning awaiting news gossip and results from Australia. And after calling Spirit listee Ari in nearby Whistler I almost feel part of things thanks solely to the WWW and my good old hotmail address.

It is a little strange being in a country where fans of the world game itself are a rarity. Had the club been formed ten years ago I'd have been in big trouble keeping up with all the gossip. But today I can read Ian Cockerill's reports in the Herald just like everyone else. And since when did the Herald ever have color snaps of the action anyway?

But thanks to the Internet I can give suggestions about which roadhouse on the road to Canberra is the best for travelling Bobstanders. Or even make up songs about our players, from \_ of the world away! For that reason I'm not homesick at all. To quench the sporting thirst I've had to satisfy myself with a crash course in ice hockey. I even attended a Vancouver Canucks match the other night where I was seated in front of guys from Newcastle who'd played for Rosebuds. But it is not the same. Canadians haven't got a clue

about real support. And spend most of their time worrying about the Montreal Canadiens or Toronto Maple Leafs as the temperatures plummet outside.

So Australia's latest sporting sensation with continue to roll on. And money pending I'll continue to roll on around North America. And North America will continue to roll on in complete ignorance to the newest team in Sydneytown. Or would they? I opened up to the sports sections of the local Vancouver Province rag to do my normal breakfast routine. I would browse casually through the pages and pages of reports and statistics about the much vaunted but ridiculously overpaid Canucks. Maybe there would be reports about the Premier League or Serie A to titillate over? But no, there they were, results from last weeks rounds of the A League. Sure one of the results read South Melbourne 2 Spirit 0. But at least I saw that even in a miniscule way this club had made it overseas.

At least I know that with me overseas there will be a large band of committed supporters willing to keep the flag flying. And when I do get home there will be a new summer home for me, the North Sydney Oval Bob Stand.

In any case regards from Canada.

Yours in red white gold and blue.

Julian Farrell  
4/1/99

This story begins before the First World War, in the East End of London. My grandfather (now sadly deceased) remembered little of England, but prior to his post-war emigration he recalled only "rain, the Zeppelins going over, and going to Upton Park to watch the Hammers". As a child, this was the last chance our family had of following a nationally competing club for nearly 85 years. Until Northern Spirit, that is.

Pop came to Australia still as a lad with his family, and settled in Auburn. Depression and ultimately another war came along, but not before he had sons of his own, including my old man Harry. Come the end of WW2, Australia turned to sport and leisure and in Sydney's west, that included football. In those days even Aussies still called it football, and Dad and his mates were obsessed with it.

Those were the glory days of club football, albeit only at a Sydney wide level. Sides such as Auburn and Granville played solid football and enjoyed good crowds. But things were incomplete. The competition was regional at best and of course, national representation was a joke, the players often meeting in the dressing room for the first time, minutes before kickoff.

Gradually the game faded, and football was increasingly dominated by ethnic clubs, who ultimately cared only for their insular groups. Dad moved to Epping and had a family of his own. He had never properly quenched his thirst for the game, and the passion burned away in the suburban sixties, with little chance of outlet.

As I and my brothers grew, Dad began taking to us games such as "Australia vs Glasgow Rangers", exhibition matches at best. A couple of World Cups came and went, I was too young for them to have an impact and football to me was playing (badly) with the local youth club.

For me, things changed forever in 1973. Dad kept me up in the middle of the night and on a scratchy black and white telly, Jimmy Mackay hit a cracking goal that sent Australia to the World Cup finals on our one and only appearance. That incredible achievement made me a football devotee forever and launched the National Soccer League. It seemed that finally, football had arrived in this country and that following a national league club was could happen naturally.

Initially, things looked promising. There were monster crowds in Newcastle, there was commercial TV coverage and teams like Sydney City who seemed generic enough for everyone to support. But the rest of the story, you know....

As crowds, standards and interest declined, the Bowmans searched in vain for someone to support. Sydney City collapsed, the Blacktown City and Olympic for years in fits and spurts. As we would often lament at family gatherings "What hope has this game got, if football nuts like ourselves aren't attracted to the national league". Our only solace were the rare internationals, with regular four year depression as each world cup came and went.

Finally, twenty or so years after the leagues inception, just when you think things will never change, along comes the Spirit - almost out of the blue! For the first time in my life, I have a local national club to support. Everything about this club rings true - the style of play, the location, the crowds, the promotion.

We Bowmans then, have a lot of lost cheering to make up for. That's why you'll find Harry, at 65, standing with the Spirit Army signing along (the oldest army member?).

And me? - well I'm there too, but increasingly I bring my 7 year old son along to sit and watch the game with him. It gratifying to think that he is able to do what his great grandfather also did at such a young age, eight decades and three generations earlier. What a pity there was such a gap in between.

Mark Bowman

## Are you Les Murray in disguise?

Shortly after I wrote the Are you Les Murry column for Issue One, Les Murry did it again. In Australian & British Soccer Weekly (Vol 20 No 913 Tues 19 January 1999) he devotes his regular piece to the possible demise of Sydney United. Instead of looking at the issue in terms of progress, and lets face it if a club can't get 4,000 for a local derby what hope is there, Les confidently predicts "dire consequences on the broad future of our game beyond what most people realise" (If United go down to the state league) and even worst things will happen if Melbourne Knights also leave the National League.

Some of the language used by Les could come straight out of a propaganda handbook. ".... their sons would play in front of big crowds, their proud chests bulging under a shirt adorned with the red and white checks of the old country." Without even touching the big crowd comment what about playing for the Team or even Australia? The article is also littered with constant negative references to the efforts to mainstream football in this country.

Les continues this line of thinking by showing the a large number of Australia National team players have Croatian parents, thus for the good of the National team, Croatian teams are needed in the National League. There is even a suggestion that if Croatian teams were in Brisbane and Adelaide more quality players could be found. Well Les there is another way of looking at these figures. In a sporting mad nation such as Australia, the World cup aside people are hard pressed to find any sporting event around the world where Australia does not have a team that does well. People from all backgrounds take part in other sports without the need for certain teams for different ethnic minorities. Indeed the lack of players in our National team from "mainstream" Australia should be huge cause for concern. It clearly shows that most of the population don't feel welcome at National League games. The crowd figures from Perth, Spirit, Sydney United and Melbourne Knights would seem to support this.

In the long run the demise of teams aimed at one ethnic group will not harm the national team at all. Players of Croatian background will be welcomed at other clubs as excellent players and not seen as Croatian players. If they are goods enough they will make the team, and if not then perhaps our National team will have even better players to select from.

Interestingly only two weeks later Les did a complete backflip and wrote that based on the success of Glory and Spirit, every club must work to embrace a wider market and attract better crowds.

January 29. Sydney United take three points at North Sydney. A group of United "fans" repeatedly let off flares in the Lower Macartney Stand, not only are these banned at football games but these explosives have been known to seriously injure people. At this same game the security guards did nothing and Police refused to take actions on the grounds that it might 'further provoke the situation'. Not surprisingly, Spirit now use a different security company.

The Daily Telegraph. January 30. The football reporter John Taylor leads off by blasting some of the songs sung by Spirit fans and accuses us of possibly inciting some of the problems. Only after attacking us at length do the actions of the away supporters get a mention. John must clearly see that our actions are such a problem that most fans stay away each week -NOT! John Taylor, are you Les Murray in disguise?

Before the season started it wonderful to hear Remo talk about reclaiming the word football. He felt it was time to take this back to our game and rightly so. Northern Spirit Football Club has a great ring to it. It was also wonderful to see several hundred children (perhaps more) practicing their skills before the South Melbourne game. In the lights, wearing white T-shirts they looked great, that is until you read the back of the shirts - Northern Spirit Soccer Academy! What happened to Football?? Whoever came up with this idea, are you Les Murray in disguise?

## TPAAH's pub guide

It's a hard job but somebody's got to do it. In an effort to ensure you have as much fun, before and after the game, as you do at the football we present part 1 of an ongoing series, the TPAAH pub guide.

### The North Sydney Bowling Club

Schooner of VB/New: \$2.25 before game \$2.15 after game

Food: No

Location: Walker St, in the Park behind North Sydney Oval (sort of behind the Doug Walters Hill)

Hours: Varies

Staggering time to/from ground: It's behind the ground so at worst 3 minutes.

Before a game the only way to describe the venue is that from the choice of colour scheme and decor, this is a typical Australian bowling club. You know the type, you don't even have to see the bowling greens to know you are in one. Before the game if you are looking for a really really quiet drink (quiet being the operative word) this is the place to get it.

Everything changes after the game, the bowling club becomes a hive of activity as players and VIP's drop in for a drink. Unless you are a player or club official the only way to get in after a game is to become a Spirit member, this being about the only benefit of membership. It should be noted that the players do enjoy talking to the fans. After a win they stay for a while, enjoying the atmosphere and definitely don't just 'pop in for 2 minutes'. Many fans also show up to enjoy a few drinks but some night the kids can be annoying.

By far the biggest problem faced at the bowling club is the security staff. Supplied by the North Sydney Leagues club they tend to spend their nights expecting trouble. Serious offences such as dropping a scarf on a green or wearing a hat inside result in threats of the offenders being banned. When this is challenged, instead of acting professionally the typical attitude is to puff their steroid-enhanced chests out and offer to settle the matter outside. Indeed for several weeks being abused by security upon arrival was the norm for some Bob Stand people. Fortunately in recent weeks things have changed for the better. After complaining to the Football Club about these problems, the Bowling Club now provide intelligent security who not only don't set out to annoy patrons but can also smile and hold civilised conversations. All in all, a major step forward.

And for the girls out there here's Evelyns comments:

I must admit this is probably not a fair comparisant to Percy's bar [see Issue One]. I've only been to the bowling club after a game so thus never completly sober, and usually only after we have won; so be warned. There are two sets of toilets, one set (the larger of the two) by the entrance, the other to the right of the bar. To my slightly drunken, but highly critical eye, they were both clean, in fact the front set reeked of disinfectant on the day I went.

Starting with the front set, once again these are 'traditional Australian' type club toilets i.e. the womens are painted in sickening peach and pink colour scheme: when will people realise that the only women who like pink are funny old ladies half senile. There is good lighting, but who wants to fix their make-up with those colours bouncing off the walls. There are more toilets here, but more people use them, so especially right after the game, there is a queue.

The inside set are, fortunately, painted white, nice, clean, simple white. The lighting is bright, and the mirrors are clear, come to these to fix your make-up (although there is not much room, only one person can fit comfortably in front of the mirror). There are only two toilets here, but hardly anyone uses them so there is never a queue. The only problem is, now that you all know about it, there WILL probably be a queue next time I need to go.

## Subscriptions & Back Issues to Three Points and a Hangover

Subscriptions and back issues are available. Each issue costs \$3 mailed to your door (Australia only). For overseas contact us for a price. Please specify which issue you would like to start with.

Make your cheques and Money Orders payable to Tancred Fergus and send them to  
PO Box 367  
Alexandria  
2015

Three points and hangover (TPAAN) is not the only fanzine available in Australia. For those who are interested the following publications are also available:

**Studs up**, the Oz fans Perspective is four years old and still going strong. As the national fanzine it deals with many issues each month and is available from Kevin Christopher, PO Box 53, Oakleigh South, 3167 Vic. Studsup@ozemail.com.au  
some material is online at: [www.ozemail.com.au/~studsup/first1.html](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~studsup/first1.html)  
Subscriptions cost \$18 for 6 issues, or \$32 for 12 issues.  
You can also get a try before you buy deal by sending TWO 95 cent stamps if you want a photo-copied back issue (give them your preference) OR THREE 95 cent stamps if you want the latest issue.

**The Farr post** is the Queensland fanzine. It is produced by Tony Moran and is available for only \$2. Send your requests to The Farr Post, PO Box 478 Bulimba, Qld 4171.

**My Blue Heaven**, the Carlton fanzine is available by contacting Sally at My Blue heaven, PO Box 13078, Law Courts, Melbourne 3000 or mbheaven@hotmail.com

If you are interested in what happens across the Tasman, and I presume this will include what happens with the Auckland ~~Queens~~ sorry..er Kings then send an Australian \$5 note to Sitter! - Bruce Holloway, 11 Thames St, Hamilton, NZ.

### On the Internet

For those who are on the net there are two mailing lists that are very worthwhile.

To join the Northern Spirit mailing list send a mail to: [listserv@isfa2.com](mailto:listserv@isfa2.com)  
with the body: join spirit

And to join the Ozsoccer list, for discussion of all matters relating to Australian football send a mail to: [majordomo@thehub.com.au](mailto:majordomo@thehub.com.au)  
with the body: subscribe ozsoccer-l (Thats an lower case L not a one)

**Upcoming Northern Spirit games:** H=home A=away

Fri Apr 16 A Newcastle (7:30pm kick off)

Sun Apr 25 A Marconi Fairfield (7:00pm kick off)

Saturday June 12 Australia v FIFA World XI at the opening of the Olympic Stadium.

You can also see a full list of upcoming games by looking at:  
<http://spirit.webcity.com.au/rep98-99/98-99.htm>

# Percy's



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